

T. C. Steele letter S3020

This finding aid was produced using the Archivists' Toolkit

August 24, 2017

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Books and Manuscripts
140 North Senate Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204
317-232-3671

Table of Contents

<u>Summary Information</u>	3
<u>Biographical Note</u>	4
<u>Scope and Contents</u>	5
<u>Arrangement</u>	5
<u>Administrative Information</u>	5
<u>Related Materials</u>	6
<u>Controlled Access Headings</u>	6

Summary Information

Repository	Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Steele, Theodore Clement, 1847-1926
Title	T. C. Steele letter
Date	circa 1914
Extent	0.01 Cubic feet 1 folder
Language	English
Text [Folder]	S3020

Preferred Citation

T. C. Steele letter, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library

Biographical Note

Theodore Clement “T.C.” Steele, an American Impressionist painter, was born on September 11, 1847 in Owen County, Indiana to Samuel Hamilton and Harriet Newell Evans Steele. In 1852, the Steele family moved to Waveland, Indiana where T.C. Steele began his art training at the Waveland Collegiate Institute. Prior to graduating in 1868, Steele was listed as an instructor of drawing and painting at the Institute by 1865.

In 1870, Steele married Mary Elizabeth “Libby” Lakin and the couple moved to Battle Creek, Michigan and, while there, had two children: Rembrandt and Margaret. The Steeles returned to Indiana in 1873 where T.C. opened a studio in Indianapolis and painted portraits commissioned by wealthy residents.

With the help of Henry Lieber and thirteen other patrons, Steele raised enough money to study art in Munich, Germany. In 1880, Steele, his wife, and their children (including their baby son Shirley) sailed to Germany and Steele enrolled as a student at the Royal Academy of Art. During his five years in Germany, Steele sent original paintings as well as copies of paintings from the Munich galleries back home to his patrons. While in Munich, Steele began working on landscapes under J. Frank Currier.

In 1885, the Steele family returned to Indianapolis. Steele opened a studio downtown and resumed painting portraits for the wealthy; many of the commissioned portraits were of famous Indiana residents including Eli Lilly, Benjamin Harrison, Henry Lieber, and several Indiana governors. During this time, Steele also opened and taught classes at an art school. Although Steele earned his living by painting portraits and teaching, he became increasingly interested in landscapes throughout the 1890s. Steele often spent the spring and summer in the countryside painting, but returned to the city to paint and teach during the colder months.

Steele left his teaching position in 1895. In 1898, Steele and fellow artist J. Otis Adams purchased a home in a secluded area of Brookville, Indiana which they named The Hermitage. After contracting tuberculosis, Libby Steele died in 1899. In the period after his wife’s death, Steele was awarded an honorary degree by Wabash College, exhibited his art at the Paris Exposition, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and the Society of Western Artists’ Sixth Annual Exposition, opened a new studio in Indianapolis, and served as the chair of the acquisitions committee for the Art Association. In 1906, Steele sold his interest in The Hermitage to Adams.

In 1907, Steele married Selma Laura Neubacher and purchased 60 acres of land in Brown County, Indiana. On this land, Steele built a studio-home which the couple named the House of the Singing Winds. Over time, Steele made additions to the property and acquired more land to create a 211 acre complex which included a gallery and gardens. Originally the couple’s summer residence, the House of the Singing Winds became their year-round home in 1912.

During his Brown County period, Steele exhibited work at the International Exhibition of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Santiago, Chile and at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, California. He also became a member of the National Academy of Design in New York and was awarded

an honorary degree from Indiana University. In 1922, Steele was named Indiana University's artist-in-residence.

Steele continued to paint despite suffering a heart attack in December of 1925. In 1926, he became ill and died on July 24, 1926 at his home in Brown County. Steele's ashes were buried in a family cemetery at the House of the Singing Winds.

Sources:

Collection item.

Newton, Judith V. "Theodore C. Steele: A Chronology." *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 10-11.

Perry, Rachel Berenson. *Paint and Canvas: A Life of T. C. Steele*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2011.

Steele, Selma N., Theodore L. Steele, and Wilbur D. Peat. *The House of the Singing Winds: The Life and Work of T. C. Steele*. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1989.

Scope and Contents

This collection includes a letter from T. C. Steele to a Mr. Brown written in Brown County, Indiana ranging from 1907 to 1926 and contains a brief autobiography.

Arrangement

This collection consists of a single item.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Rare Books and Manuscripts

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Legal title, copyright, and literary rights reside with Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN. All requests to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted to Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Custodial History

This collection was received by Rare Books and Manuscripts as a donation from the Steele Memorial.

Accruals

No further additions are expected.

Processing Information

Collection processing completed and EAD finding aid created 2017/08/22 by Kristin Lee.

Related Materials

Related Archival Material

Materials relating to this collection may be found in the following collections in Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN:

OB025: T. C. Steele oversize collection

Controlled Access Headings

Subject(s)

- Artist colonies--Brown County (Ind.)

- Arts--Indiana